

around the VALLEY

SUMMER 2020

SCHUYLKILL VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT NEWSLETTER



929 lakeshore drive
leesport PA 19533-8631

Meet Mr. Michael T. Mitchell, Jr., New Superintendent of Schools

Changing roles this year is **Mr. Michael T. Mitchell, Jr.**, former high school principal, who has been hired as the district's new superintendent. A resident of Leesport, Mr. Mitchell is married to **Dr. Chrystine Mitchell**, an education professor at York College, and is the father and step-father of six children – Courtney, a student at West Chester University, **Sarah**, a student at the University of South Carolina, **Michael** and **Ava**, first-graders at Schuylkill Valley Elementary School, **Bella Hoeltzel**, a senior at SV, and **Sophia Hoeltzel**, a freshman at SV. He enjoys spending time with his family, coaching their youth sports and attending their activities. Watching football, basketball and baseball, reading and taking walks are his favorite hobbies, and he looks forward to family vacations at the Delaware and North Carolina beaches in the summer.

Mr. Mitchell is a graduate of Wyomissing Area Jr./Sr. High School and received his bachelor's degree in mathematics / secondary education from Moravian College. He earned his master's degree in education from Gratz College, his

principal's certification from Penn State Great Valley and his superintendent letter of eligibility from Gannon University. After teaching math for seven years at Governor Mifflin High School and serving four years as student dean and math teacher at Wyomissing Area Jr./Sr. High School, Mr. Mitchell moved into administration at SV. Here, he has served as high school assistant principal, middle school principal and high school principal. During his tenure, the middle school was nationally recognized twice as a School To Watch, and the high school was selected twice for *U.S. News and World Report's Gold Medal List of America's Best High Schools*.

As superintendent, Mr. Mitchell intends to work collaboratively and effectively with the school board, administration, teachers, support staff, students, parents and community to help provide our student body with the best education and co-curricular program possible. He is currently working to update the district's curriculum in all subject areas and grade levels.



Mr. Michael T. Mitchell, Jr.

IN THIS ISSUE:

2

Superintendent's
Message

3

District News

4

Berks Best

5

Meet
Dr. Sarah Yoder

PYEA Helps
The Community

6

2020
Graduation
Parade

7

Community
Partnerships
Music Awards

8

High School
Sports

10

Elementary
School Artwork

15

Middle School
Artwork

**SCHUYLKILL VALLEY
SCHOOL DISTRICT**

929 Lakeshore Drive
Leesport PA 19533-8631

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Mr. Michael T. Mitchell, Jr.
Superintendent

Dr. Sarah Yoder
High School Principal

Mrs. Melissa Kelchner
Assistant High School Principal

Mr. Joshua Kuehner
Middle School Principal

Mrs. Courtney Maguire
Assistant Middle School Principal

Mr. Jeremy L. Crills
Elementary School Principal

Mr. Jason Williams
Assistant Elementary School Principal

Mrs. Kate Costenbader
Supervisor of Special Education

Dr. Janet Heilman
Director of Teaching and Learning

Mr. Michael Billman
Director, Information Technology

Mr. Brian Feick
Business Manager

Mrs. Changming Wang
Assistant Business Manager

Mr. Casey Blankenbiller
Director, Buildings & Grounds

Miss Stephanie L. Deibler
Athletic Director

Ms. Robin Brightbill
Director of Human Resources

Mrs. Diane Kaag
Food Service Director

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mr. G. Dane Miller, President
Mr. George H. Mertz III, Vice-President
Mrs. Linda R. Lash, Secretary
Mr. Paul L. Bendigo
Mr. Robert M. Dempsey
Mrs. Nicoleen M. Kleffel
Mr. David Moll
Mr. Kevin Raudenbush
Mr. Alfonso F. Rossi

BOARD MEETINGS

Committees generally meet the third Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m. Board meetings are generally held the fourth Monday of the month at 7 p.m. in the high school's LeRoy K. Seip room. Instructions to attend the meetings via Zoom or by phone are posted on the district's website.

TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Administration	610-916-0957
High School	610-926-1706
Middle School	610-926-7111
Elementary School	610-926-4165

superintendent's MESSAGE



Dear Schuylkill Valley Community,

My first month as Superintendent of Schools has certainly been interesting, challenging and rewarding. It has been interesting in the sense that creating an entry plan in the midst of the current pandemic made every day unique. Guidelines and rules were changing daily. We literally had our plan completed and had to change our face-covering protocol two days later based on a new, clearer mandate. In the coming months, I expect there to be more and more changes. We will continue to work to provide your children with the best possible education in the safest possible environment that we possibly can provide.

My first month on the job has also been challenging. I did not go to medical school to become a superintendent! However, I have recently spent a lot of time reading articles, watching videos and speaking to medical professionals to determine the safest possible methods to get our students back to some sense of normalcy. So much is

unknown yet about this virus. The challenge has been trying to figure out the best thing to do, with so many variables, changing rules and guidelines.

As interesting and challenging as the first month has been, it has also been extremely rewarding. In my fifteen years at Schuylkill Valley, I have always been appreciative of the parental support that exists in our community. I am grateful that parents have reached out to me to ask questions about our reopening plan. Some have offered suggestions. Others have offered words of encouragement and support, understanding the difficult position we all are in. We are all committed to educating your children to their fullest potential, while doing so in the safest possible environment. I sincerely thank all of you for your comments, suggestions, opinions, and support during this truly difficult time.

Sincerely,

Mr. Michael T. Mitchell, Jr.

Superintendent

Storybook Character Day



Just a week before schools closed in March, students and staff at the elementary school spent a day dressing up as their favorite storybook characters.

Mr. Jeremy Crills, principal, visited classrooms in character as a larger-than-life sandwich and read "The Giant Jam Sandwich," a favorite book from his childhood. Storybook Character Day is observed every year as part of the school's Read Across America Week.

Farewell to Dr. Cindy Mierzejewski

The district bids a fond farewell to **Dr. Cindy Mierzejewski**, former superintendent, who retired at the end of this past school year. She led the district successfully for three years and was at the helm during many of SV's innovations and upgrades during that time. School Board president **Mr. G. Dane Miller** offered high praise for Dr. Mierzejewski's accomplishments. "During her tenure, the delivery of instruction services for our students with special needs improved dramatically," he said. "Dr. Mierzejewski's hire of **Mrs. Dawn Harris** as Director of Special Education, and their collaboration, transformed the department into a highly effective program that improved multiple areas including compliance, instructional delivery and data analysis. These changes were vital to making sure that the needs of all of our students are being met in the classroom." In addition, Mr. Miller applauded Dr. Mierzejewski's leadership in analyzing and providing for the physical plant needs of the district. "Along with the administration, board of school directors and construction partners, Dr. Mierzejewski developed a comprehensive plan to improve physical operations for the next ten years," he added. "To pay for these improvements, administration and board members collaborated with financial



management firms on a financial plan that fits into the district's established budget structure. In essence, the district is able to dramatically improve buildings with financing that did not require a tax increase this year, despite the challenges the district faced through the Covid-19 pandemic. The months of planning and discussion will benefit SV students and residents for years to come, and are part of the lasting legacy of Dr. Mierzejewski's time in leadership here."

Thank you, Dr. Mierzejewski, for your hard work and dedication to our district. Enjoy your retirement!

Panther Impact Awards 2020

The following teachers, faculty and coaches were nominated by members of the Class of 2020 for this year's Panther Impact Awards, which recognize individuals for their lasting impact on students:

Mr. Jason Bagenstose, high school English teacher/girls' soccer coach; **Mr. Mark Chlebowski**, high school science teacher; **Mrs. Kate Costenbader**, supervisor of special education; **Miss Stephanie Deibler**, athletic director; **Mr. Anthony Deininger**, high school director of instrumental music; **Miss Stacy DeMott**, high school history teacher;

Mr. Greg Drake, high school science teacher; **Mrs. Paige Figueroa**, high school English teacher; **Miss Katie Heffner**, high school English teacher; **Mrs. Angela Hohenadel**, high school cheerleading coach; **Mr. Michael Mitchell, Jr.**, superintendent of schools; **Mr. Chuck Mohn**, middle school unified arts teacher; **Mrs. Kristin Newpher**, girls' lacrosse coach; **Mr. Robert Newpher**, girls' lacrosse coach; **Mrs. Cathy Overman**, retired middle school teacher; **Mrs. Traci Pawling**, Spanish/ESL teacher; **Mr. Scott Piergrossi**, high

school choral teacher; **Mr. Matt Reed**, high school librarian / morning announcement advisor; **Mrs. Ronda Lee Seymour**, middle school art educator; **Mr. Dan Shuman**, track and field coach/instruction and technology integration coach; **Mrs. Marsha Townsend**, retired elementary school teacher; **Mrs. Susan Wood**, retired teacher.

To view a video celebrating the nominees, please click on this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ssxa nRWmYk8&feature=youtu.be>

BERKS' BEST

2 0 2 0

Congratulations to Class of 2020 graduates **Jesulayomi Adejo**, communications and foreign language finalist, and **Trevor Teprovich**, business finalist, who were recognized

in the *Reading Eagle's* 2020 Berks Best program.

Berks County high schools were invited to nominate up to two seniors in each of eleven categories, including business, communications, computer science, foreign languages, mathematics, performing arts, science/environment, social studies, community service, visual arts and vocational/technical skills.



Dr. Sarah Yoder

Meet Dr. Sarah Yoder, New High School Principal

The Schuylkill Valley family welcomes **Dr. Sarah Yoder** as its new high school principal. Originally from Kutztown, Dr. Yoder now lives in Pottsville with her husband, Grant, and their two children, Alexis, a sophomore at Penn State, and Patrick, a rising senior at Pottsville Area High School. In her spare time, Dr. Yoder volunteers as a mentor to Wilkes University students, is a member of the Lion's Club and a community church, and volunteers at a number of events throughout the year. Dr. Yoder also enjoys being outdoors, playing and watching sports, and attending performing and visual arts events.

Dr. Yoder earned her bachelor's degree in mathematics and her masters in educational development and strategies at Wilkes University, her principal certification from Alvernia University and her doctorate in educational administration from Temple University. She has been an adjunct instructor for Gratz College and taught online courses for School Boards and School District Governance and Planning, Budget and Finance in Schools. After teaching math and C++ Programming at Schuylkill Valley High School for the

1999-2000 school year, Dr. Yoder taught math in other Berks and Schuylkill County high schools before becoming an administrator. She served the Schuylkill Haven School District as its elementary school principal, director of curriculum and instruction and high school principal. Most recently, Dr. Yoder successfully led the St. Claire Area School District as superintendent for two and a half years.

Dr. Yoder's educational philosophy reflects Schuylkill Valley's focus on family and community partnerships to empower students and staff. She plans to amplify SVSD's motto – "In Our Schools, Our Future Lies" – through collaboration with a multitude of stakeholders to promote a safe and motivating learning environment for all students.

Once social distancing measures are relaxed, she looks forward to attending SVSD and community events to build relationships. In the meantime, Dr. Yoder encourages anyone who would like to communicate with her to reach out through her email: syoder@schuylkillvalley.org and to like and tag the high school's Facebook page – www.facebook.com/schuylkillvalleyhighschool.

HIGH SCHOOL



Supporting Four Diamonds From Home

The district's chapter of the Pennsylvania Youth Education Association (PYEA) sponsored an Instagram Virtual Spirit Week May 4 – 8, coordinated by co-advisors **Mr. Jeffrey Chillot**, high school math teacher and head football coach, **Mrs. Lisa Chillot**, high school science teacher, class of 2020 graduates Julia Stricker and Savanna Stricker, and senior Addison Angstadt. Due to the Covid-19 related cancellation of both the annual mini-THON and the Powder Puff football game, both fundraisers for Four Diamonds, the PYEA organized the spirit week to foster a sense of community among homebound district families and hopefully raise some money through online donations. There was a different theme each day and students in all grades were invited to dress accordingly and submit their pictures. Using the voting option built into the app, a winner was chosen daily. Each finalist and semifinalist won "For The Kids" swag bags, with the finalists winning additional gift cards donated by the SVEA. The week of fun and sharing culminated in a donation of \$915 to Four Diamonds, which assists families of children hospitalized at Penn State Hershey's children's hospital.

The finalists and winners for each day were:

STAR WARS DAY

The (Taylor) Grim Family

Travis Reifsnnyder

Taylor and Jordan Shekalus

WINNERS – Michael Hall and Jenna Kirby

PAJAMA DAY

Mara Nagle

Taylor and Jordan Shekalus

Abby Witinski

WINNERS – Cassidy and Regan Rittenhouse

GOLD OUT/MINI-THON SHIRT DAY

Olyvia Bainbridge

Cassidy and Regan Rittenhouse

Taylor and Jordan Shekalus

WINNER – Madison Calleja

THROWBACK THURSDAY

Jesulayomi Adejo

Olyvia Bainbridge

Taylor and Jordan Shekalus

WINNER – Mike Herman

PANTHER PRIDE (RED & BLACK) DAY

Elsie Lebron

Mara Nagle

Briana Silasavage

WINNER – Sarah Gilbert

GRADS2020



Grad Parade!

On June 7, members of the Class of 2020 and their families gathered at the Leesport Farmers Market to kick off the district's first-ever Graduation Parade through the Schuylkill Valley community. Organized by **Mrs. Kim Stricker, Sgt. Michael Wiley, Mrs. Veronica Wiley** and **Ms. Kelly Jacoby**, the event featured students in their caps and gowns riding in decorated vehicles on a 50-mile route through local neighborhoods.

Before leaving the market, students had the opportunity to pose for pictures with a celebratory background. Once on the route, they were escorted by first responders from the **Bern Township Police Department**, the **Central Berks Fire Company**, the **Fleetwood Fire Police**, **Greenfields Fire Company**, **Leesport Fire Company** and **EMS** and **Northern Berks Police Department**.



Many friends and neighbors lined the parade route to wish the students well, and celebrated with the graduates even as rain poured down during part of the event. Once back at the market, students were greeted by numerous SV teachers from all three buildings. Thank you to the organizers and all of the parents, family and community members who made this such a special and memorable evening.



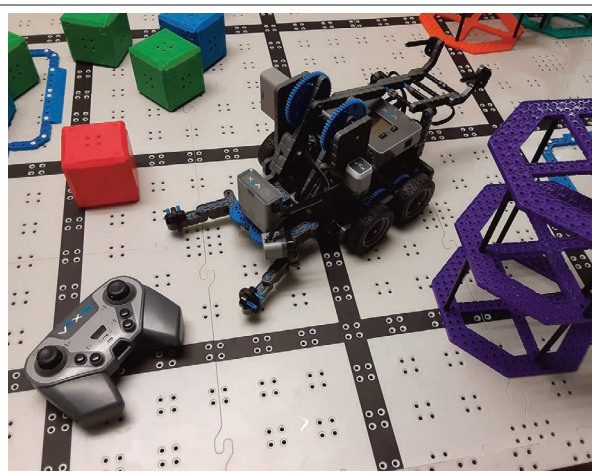
In Partnership With Our Community

Ashley Furniture Industries' Education Foundation has donated \$22,000 to the middle school STEAM program for the purchase of VEX IQ robotics equipment. The equipment, from VEX Robotics and the REC (Robotics, Education and Competition) Foundation, includes robotic kits, competition fields and game elements, which will be added to the eighth-grade curriculum for this coming school year.

STEAM teachers **Mr. Howard Emerson** and **Mr. Makoto Kizuka** prepared the proposal for Ashley Industries with the goals of increasing student participation in robotics concepts, the volume of coding opportunities, interest in STEAM pathways at the high school and collegiate level, and networking for STEAM teachers and students through local and regional competitions. Currently, all seventh-grade students receive robotics instruction on the Lego Mindstorm platform, so the addition of the VEX platform in eighth grade will expose those students to two different robotics programs. With the further opportunity to experience VEX EDR at the high school level, our students will be able to engage deeply with a range of robotics and programming tools. Thank you, Ashley Industries!



Boxes of robotic kits for eighth grade



Claw VEX robot that can be programmed to do tasks

Giving in a Time of Need

Special thanks to the following staff members and volunteers who, under the leadership of **Mrs. Diane Kaag**, Director of Food Services, prepared, distributed and delivered grab-and-go meals for children in the Schuylkill Valley community during the Covid-19 related school closures:



Mrs. Christine Bendigo

Mrs. Lori Brenner

Miss Stephanie Deibler

Mrs. Rose Eisenhofer

Mrs. Taylor Ferretti

Mrs. Tina Flood

Mrs. Shelley Folk

Mrs. Katrina Gonzalez

Mrs. Mary Haag

Mrs. Charlene Henne

Mrs. Missy Kelchner

Mr. Brad Kleffel

Miss Brynley Kleffel

Mrs. Nici Kleffel

Mrs. Courtney Maguire

Mrs. Jennifer Mateo

Mrs. Anne Ostrowski

Mr. Stephen Ostrowski

Mrs. Nikki Rider

Mrs. Marian Riggins

Mrs. Sharon Rittenhouse

Mrs. Kelly Ruth

Mrs. Laura Shuman

Mrs. Renee Siglin

Music To Our Ears

Congratulations to the following SV students who received awards and/or scholarships from the Reading Musical Foundation:

Jesulayomi Adejo – STEAM award

Brian Gambler – Percussion, 1st place, Willis M. Rapp Percussion Scholarship (Grade 10-12), Outstanding Accompanist

Annie Gao – Piano, Honorable Mention, Ann W. Souders Piano Scholarship (Grade 8)

Emily Gao – Piano, 1st place, Bruce P. Bengtson Keyboard/Organ Scholarship (Grade 9)

Kyle Gao – Piano, Honorable Mention, Thomas W. and Marion Christman Balkcom Scholarship, (Grade 4)

Michael Hall – Outstanding Musician, Penske Jazz

Ryan Szymczyk – Euphonium, 2nd place, Lewis "Skip" Norcott Low Brass Scholarship (Grades 10 – 12)

HIGH SCHOOL

State Medals for SV Swimmers



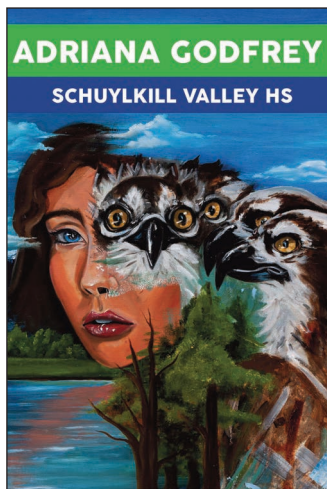
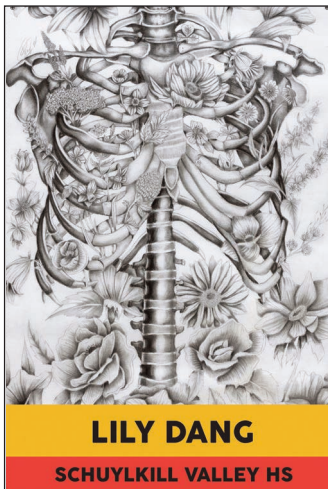
Marlee Rickert, Class of 2020 graduate

Congratulations to Class of 2020 graduate **Marlee Rickert**, who was awarded two gold medals from the PIAA Class 2A state swimming competition, which was canceled in April due to Covid-19.

The organization's Board of Control approved a recommendation from the PIAA's Swimming and Diving Steering Committee to award medals based on the seed times of the entrants.

Marlee was seeded first in the state in the 200-yard freestyle (1:50.89) and the 100-yard backstroke (56.00). All together, Marlee now has eight individual state medals in her high school career. She plans to swim at George Washington University.

In addition, junior **Megan Ehrnfeldt** received sixth-place medals for the 100 fly (56.71) and 500 free (5:07.52). The girls' 200 medley relay team, comprised of **Marlee Rickert, Aryanna Kulp, Meghan Ehrnfeldt** and **Katie Eisenhofer**, (1:46.83), and 200 free relay team, comprised of **Marlee Rickert, Meghan Ehrnfeldt, Emily Gao** and **Katie Eisenhofer** (1:38) earned silver medals. The students were coached by **Mr. Kyle Campbell**.



Community Art Awards

Senior **Lily Dang** and Class of 2020 graduate **Adriana Godfrey** led the competition in Berks Arts Council's 2020 Fast Lane Art juried contest held in March. Out of 1,103 students who showcased 1,731 pieces of artwork, Lily's entry, *Skeletal Garden*, won first prize and her piece, *Twin Braids*, was selected as committee choice. Adriana won honorable mention with her entry, *Eyesprey*.

Lily is the daughter of Vinh Dang and Hong Ngo, of Ontelaunee Township, and Adriana, of Centre Township, is the daughter of Melissa and Darrell Godfrey. The winning artwork is currently being showcased on street pole banners in West Reading and the City of Reading.



Right on Target

Class of 2020 graduate and champion archer **Danielle Readinger** was featured in a *Reading Eagle* article in June.

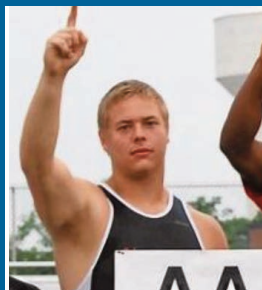
Starting with archery when she was six years old, Danielle has become a top competitor, finishing first in the state and tenth in worlds in the International Bowhunters Organization youth division tour.

A member of the SV soccer team and National Honor Society, Danielle will attend Kutztown University and continue to compete in tournaments with her sponsor, PSE, an archery supply company.

SPORTS



Evan Arnott



Jason Coon



Derek Gaul



Logan Grauer



Jared Horne



Joe Jardine



Dustin Brown



Joe Mundell



Brad Najac



Luke Seymour



Brendan Sparr



Clay Stabolepszy

Reading Eagle's All-Decade Track and Field Team

The following alumni and current students were named to the *Reading Eagle's* All-Decade boys' track and field team for outstanding accomplishments over the past ten years:

Evan Arnott, PIAA Class 2A gold and silver medalist in discus. Two-time District 3 champion. Set county record at 195-11 in 2013.

Jason Coon, shot put, honorable mention

Derek Gaul, three-time District 3 and two-time PIAA Class 2A long jump champion. Broke 46-year-old Berks' record by jumping 24-6.5 at 2011 district meet.

Logan Grauer, 300 hurdles, honorable mention

Jared Horne, PIAA triple jump gold medalist in Class 2A and two-time district champ in triple and high jump. District 3 champion and PIAA bronze medalist in Class 2A, 2013 in 110 hurdles. Helped SV win a PIAA team title in 2012.

Joe Jardine, two-time PIAA Class 2A pole jump gold medalist and one-time silver medalist, three-time District 3 pole vault gold medalist, set county record at 16-3 in 2018; long jump, honorable mention

Dustin Brown, triple jump, honorable mention

Joe Mundell, Two-time District 3 and PIAA Class 2A shot put champion. Became first Berks thrower in 14 years to reach 60 feet in 2016.

Brad Najac, triple jump, honorable mention

Luke Seymour, 800 meters, honorable mention

Brendan Sparr, three-time District 3 and two-time PIAA long jump gold medalist in class 2A, personal best 23-11.5

Clay Stabolepszy, 800 meters, honorable mention

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



SVSD Virtual Art Show

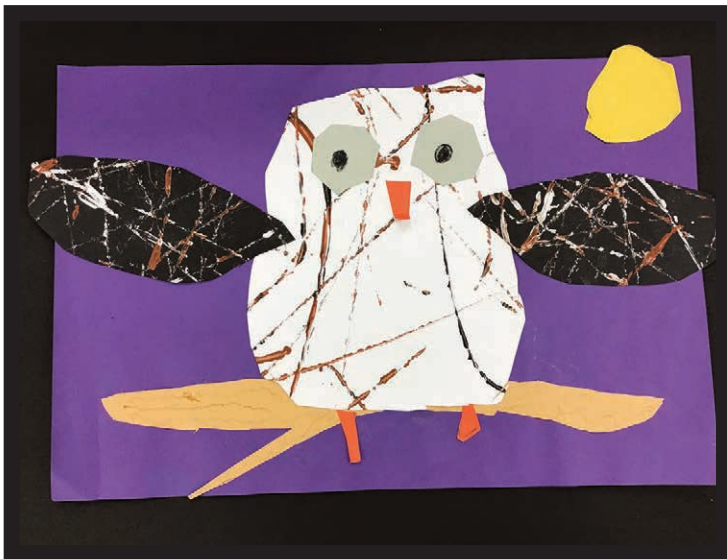
Each spring, the elementary, middle and high schools celebrate students' artistic accomplishments in art shows held on campus. This year, because of the coronavirus school closure, we are instead highlighting student artwork from all three schools in the newsletter and online.

Special thanks to **Mrs. Carey Steward**, elementary art educator, **Mrs. Ronda Lee Seymour**, middle school art educator, **Ms. Jess Harle**, high school art educator, and **Mr. Matthew Cullen**, high school technology and engineering education teacher, for curating the artwork.

<https://sites.google.com/schuylkillvalley.org/svhs2020virtualartshow>

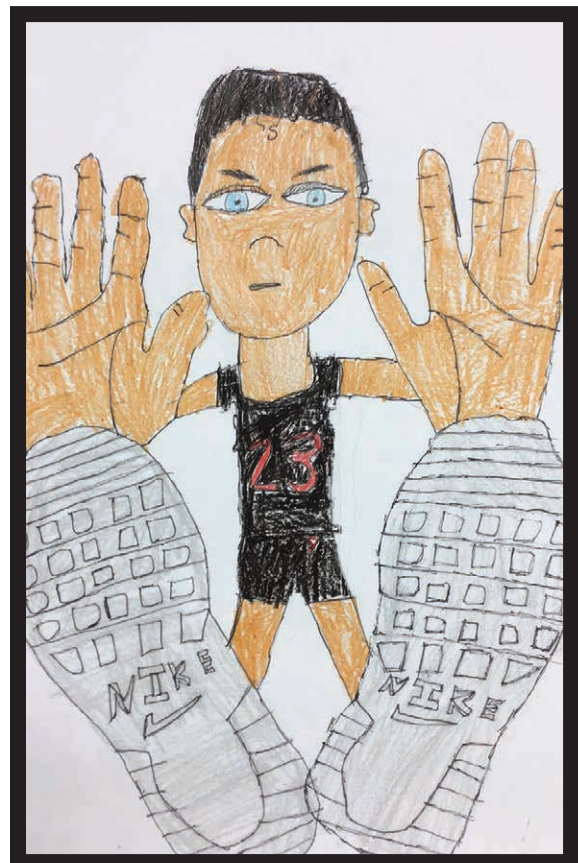


ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

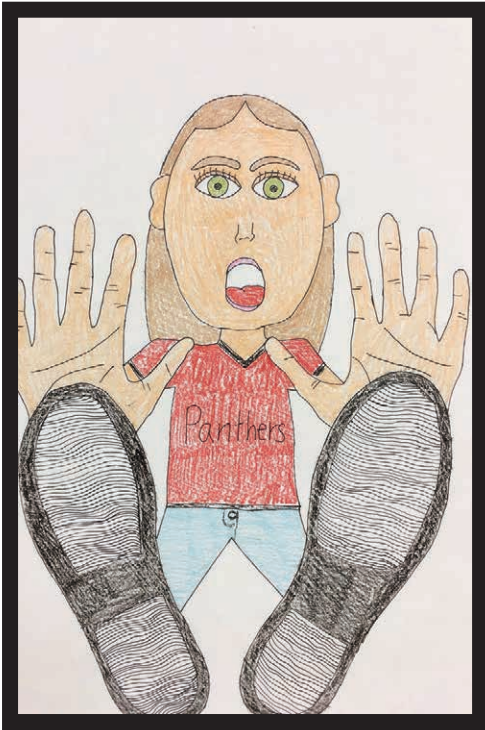


ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



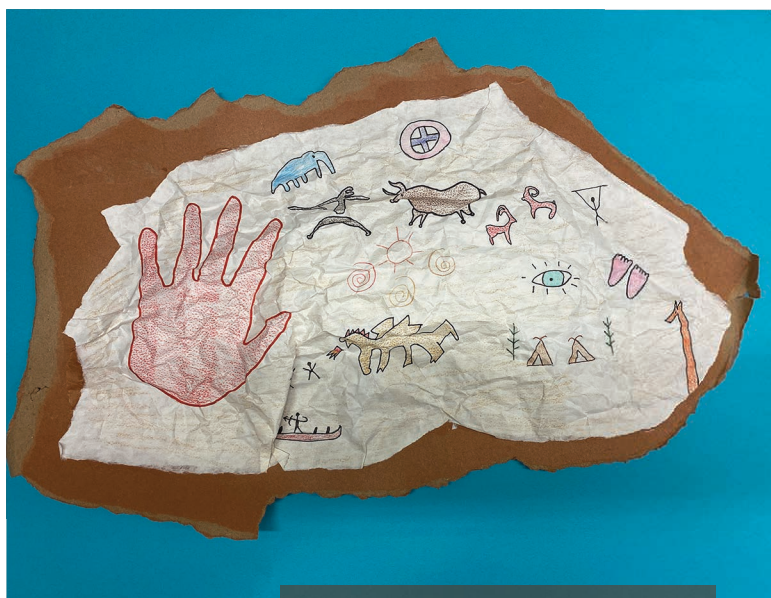
MIDDLESCHOOL



Amber Stoudt



Austin Kerper

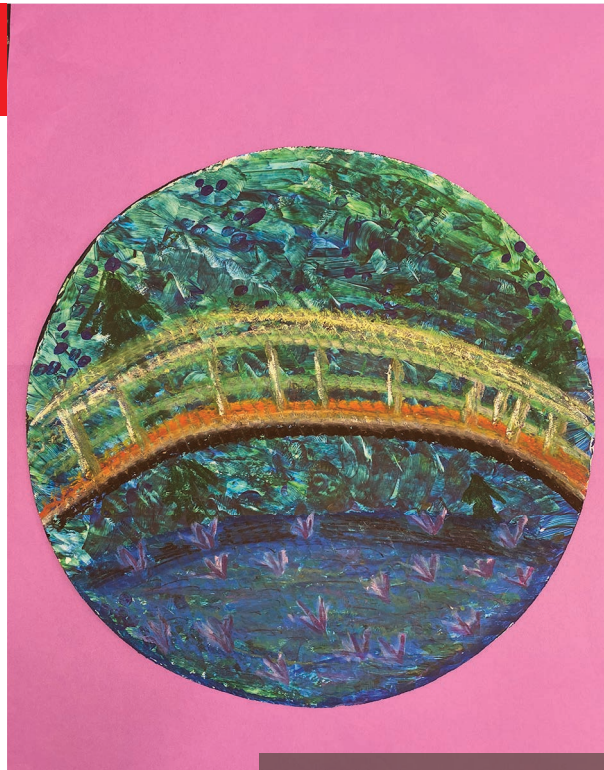


Natalie Fernandez

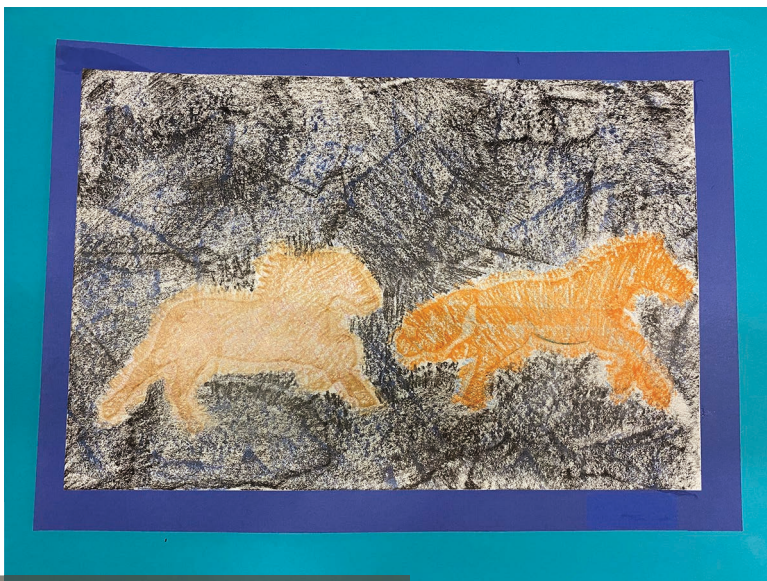
MIDDLESCHOOL



Gregory Manwiller



Joseph Mercado

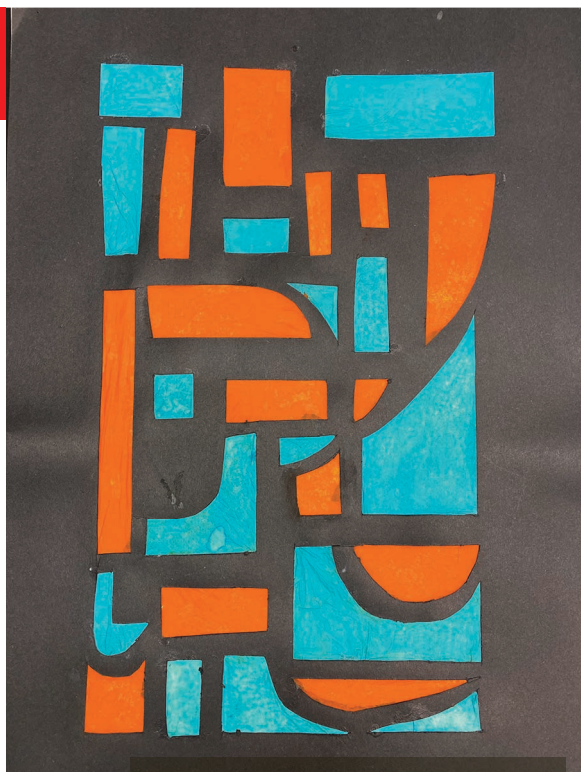


Annie Gao

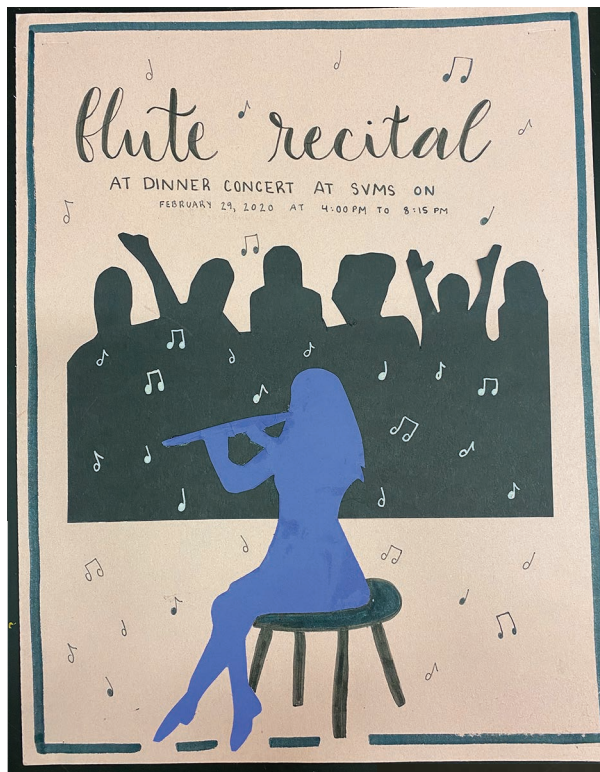


Isabella Burch

MIDDLESCHOOL



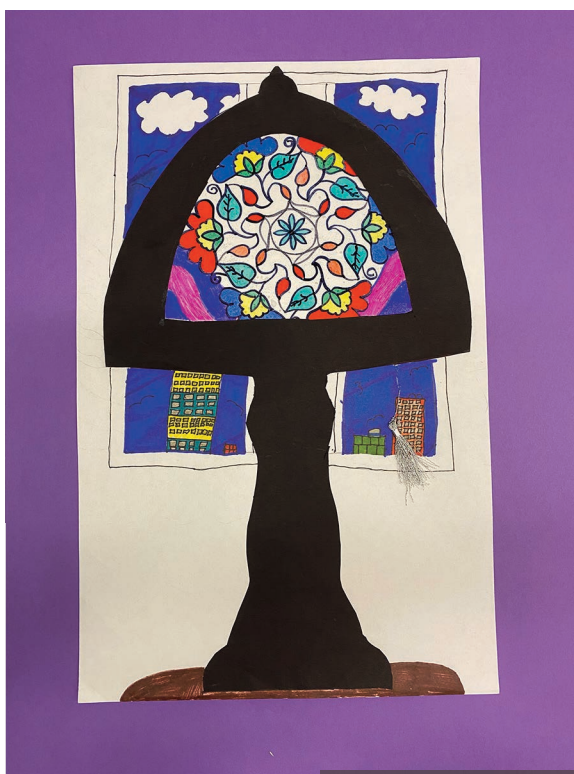
Josh Hill



Juliana Zahaira



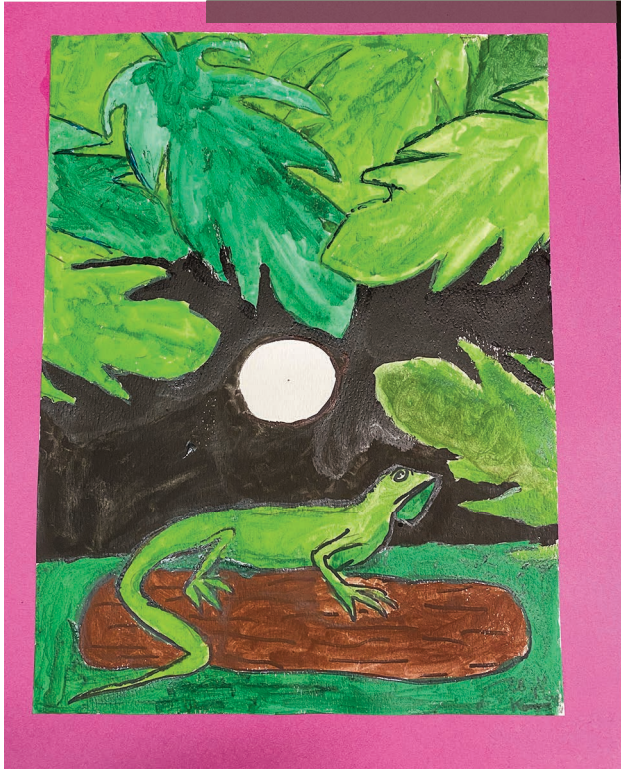
Abigail Tenney



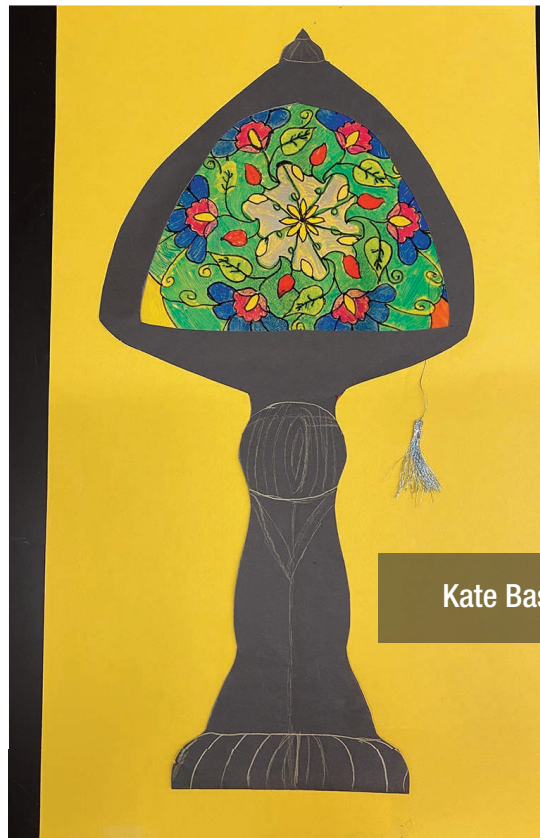
Heaven Goho

MIDDLESCHOOL

Kameron Boyer



Mackenzie Bachman

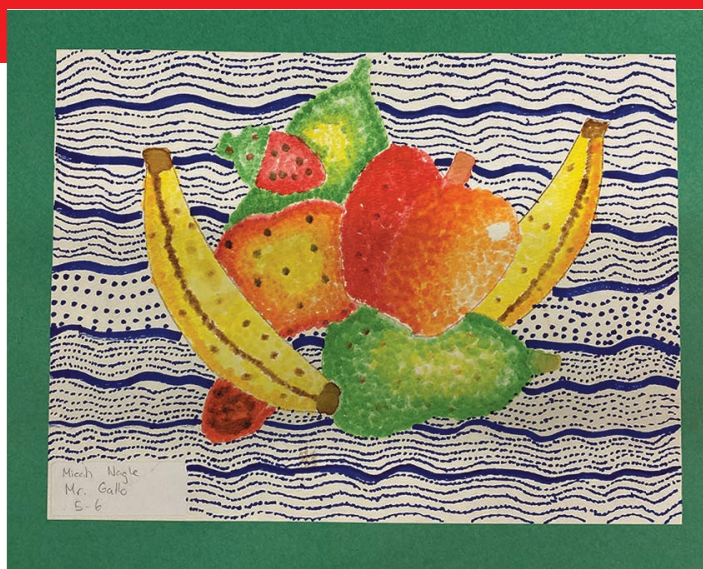


Kate Bass

MIDDLESCHOOL



Katelyn Owen



Micah Nagle

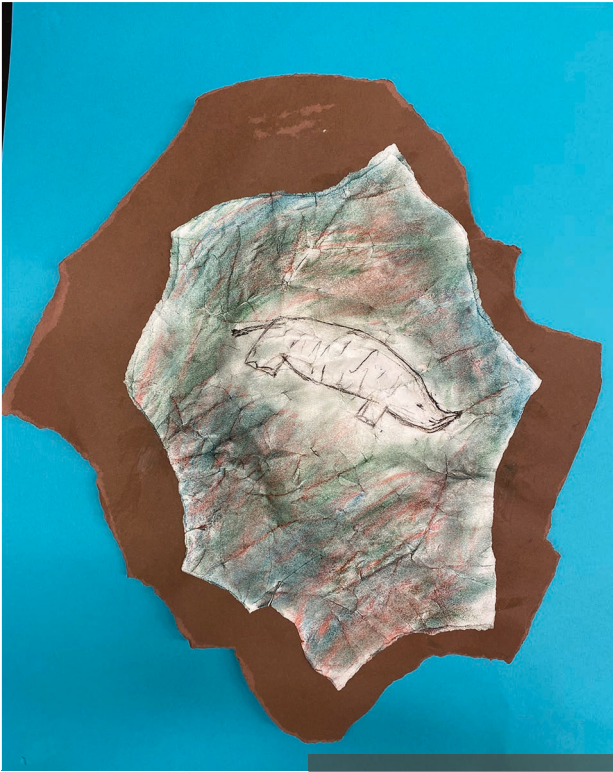


Makayla Bowers



Natalie Fernandez

MIDDLESCHOOL



Owen Machmer



Samantha Davis



Scarlet Grosselfinger

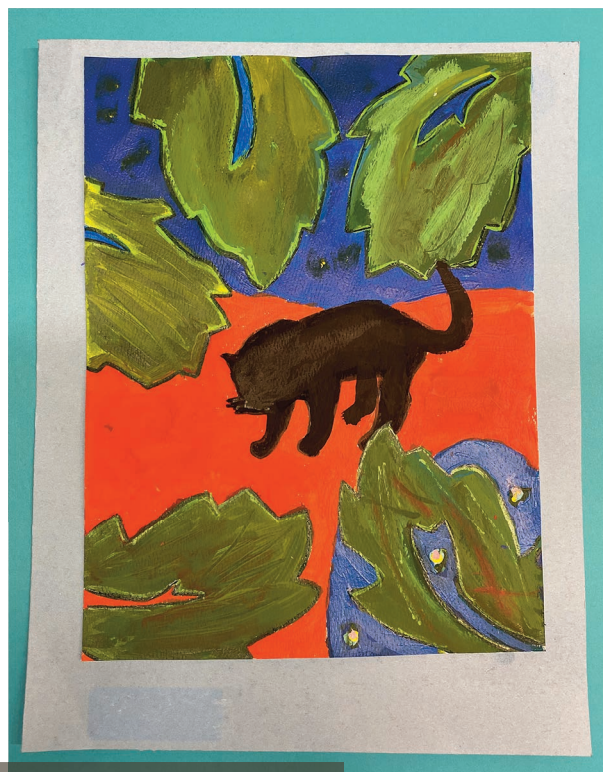


Tara Hirschtritt

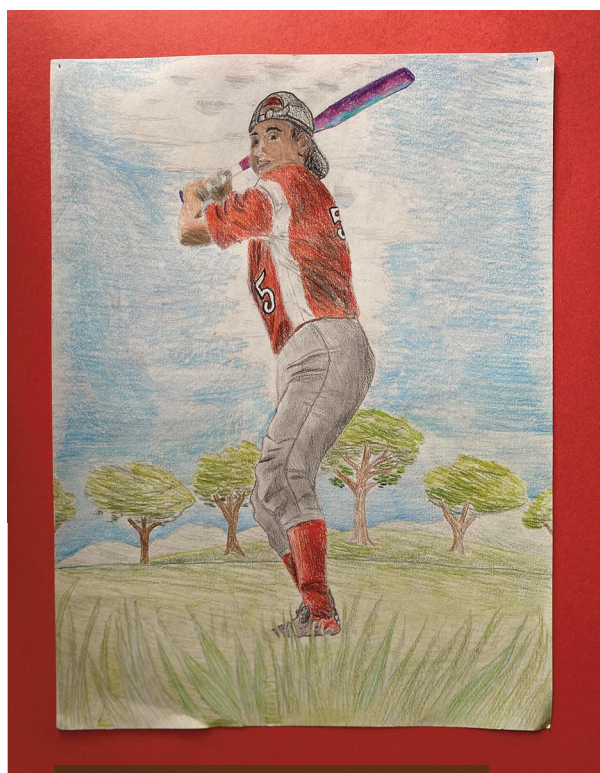
MIDDLESCHOOL



Taylor Henry



Ally Wolf



Adrianna Madden

Yary Mateo





schuylkill valley
SCHOOL DISTRICT

**The first day of school
is Wednesday,
August 26, 2020!**

To view the district's
Health and Safety Plan for re-opening
school, please visit our website at
www.schuylkillvalley.org.



Eagle Scout

Recent graduate **Trevor Teprovich** was honored in the July issue of **Representative Barry Jozwiak's** newsletter and with a special citation for attaining the level of Eagle Scout. Trevor, a son of Chris and Lisa Teprovich, Centre Township, is a member of Troop 160 of Leesport. For his service project he finished the attic room in the Leesport Lockhouse by whitewashing the walls, treating the wood floors with linseed oil and turpentine, and building a toy box that includes period games with which the children who lived there might have played.